

## Summary of *Iliad*, Books 3-8

**Book 3** begins with the Greek forces assembled in battle formation ready to attack the Trojans. Paris, the brother of Hektor, heckles the Greeks but when the Greeks see him, he runs back into the company of his fellow Trojans. Hektor rebukes Paris for being a coward, which prompts Paris to acknowledge that Hektor is right to insult him, stating, "Ah Hektor, you criticize me fairly, yes, nothing unfair, beyond what I deserve." Paris tells Hektor that he is willing to meet Menelaus, Helen's husband, one-on-one in battle. Hektor accepts Paris's offer to fight Menelaus and tells Agamemnon to allow the two men to fight, instead of an all-out battle between the Greeks and Trojans.

Within the city of Troy, Helen is visited by Iris, the messenger of Zeus, who tells her that Paris is going to fight Menelaus in a duel. Helen goes out to watch the battle from one of the ramparts overlooking the battlefield where she finds Priam, the king of the Trojans and father of Hektor and Paris, looking down on the battlefield. Helen proceeds to identify the famous Greek warriors. This part of the narrative serves as an introduction to the main warriors on the Greek side who will appear later in the story.

On the battlefield, the Greek warrior, Menelaus, and the Trojan warrior, Paris, engage in a duel. Paris throws his spear first and hits Menelaus's shield but no damage is done. Next Menelaus throws his spear and manages to wound Paris in the chest. Once Paris is hit, Menelaus attacks Paris while he is on the ground and drags him by his helmet, which causes Paris to choke. At this point, we see Aphrodite intercede on the Trojans behalf as she rescues Paris. Paris is delivered in a cloud of mist back to his bedroom by Aphrodite. Helen, having seen the battle from the rampart, is ordered by Aphrodite to return to the bedroom to be with Paris. Once she sees Paris, Helen rebukes him for losing the battle.

**Book 4** is the first book in which the Greek and Trojan warriors engage in what is known as a "pitched battle." The battle starts with the Trojan archer, Pandaros, having been deceptively provoked by Athena, shooting an arrow at Menelaus. Menelaus is wounded in the leg, which prompts Agamemnon to give the battle cry to his Greek warriors. Agamemnon directs Odysseus and Diomedes to stop delaying and to head into battle. Homer describes the battle vividly as Greek and Trojan warriors inflict damage on one another.

**Book 5** includes divine as well as mortal combat. Athena endows the Greek warrior, Diomedes, with divine strength which he uses to wound Aphrodite and Ares. Hera and Athena mock Aphrodite who has been wounded by the mortal, Diomedes. Aeneas, the Trojan warrior whom Virgil used as the hero of his epic poem, the *Aeneid*, appears in battle and is wounded by Diomedes. Aphrodite rescues him in another instance of divine intervention. Ares, who is also on the Trojan side, provides the Trojan warrior, Hektor, with divine assistance. Diomedes, recognizing this assistance, warns the other Greeks to steer clear of Hektor. In response to Ares providing assistance to the Trojans, Hera and Athena team up and go after Ares by providing assistance to Diomedes. Diomedes launches a spear at Ares and manages to hit him in his

stomach. Ares retreats to Olympus where he complains to Zeus about Hera and Athena. Zeus reprimands Ares for getting involved in the battle but summons Apollo to heal him.

**Book 6** features the return of Menelaus to battle where he confronts Adrestos, a Trojan warrior. Having wounded Adrestos, Menelaus caves in to Adrestos's plea for mercy. Agamemnon rebukes Menelaus for being soft and proceeds to kill him. At this point, the Trojans appear to be losing ground and Helenos, a son of Priam, urges his brother Hektor, to organize a sacrifice to Athena, so that Athena will stop aiding Diomedes. Meanwhile, there is a battle between Diomedes and Glaukos, a warrior who is an ally of the Trojans and is the second-hand man to Sarpedon. Diomedes and Glaukos reach a truce. Diomedes realizes that his grandfather, Oeneus, offered hospitality to Glaukos when Glaukos was visiting Argos. Hospitality, or in the Greek, *xenia*, was used to cement alliances that could not be broken. In light of this, Diomedes and Glaukos shake hands and form a truce. The narrative then moves back to Hektor who is busy organizing a sacrifice to Athena within the city walls. He returns from the battlefield to find Paris still with Helen. Hektor chastises Paris since the Trojans are fighting because he abducted Helen. Paris responds by telling Hektor he's on his way back to the battlefield. As he departs for battle, Helen tells Hektor that she regrets ever being born since the conflict has already caused so much suffering. The book ends with a moving scene in which Hektor says goodbye to his wife, Andromache, and son, Astyanax. When Astyanax sees his father with the plume of horse hair above his helmet, he cries out in fear. Hektor removes his helmet and takes his son in his arms, laughing that his son did not recognize him. Hektor then prays that his son outdo his father and achieve even greater fame than him.

**Book 7** begins with the return of Hektor and Paris to the battle where their renewed strength begins to turn the tide in favor of the Trojans. Athena is alarmed by this development and prepares to return to the battle to offer assistance to the Greeks. Apollo prevents Athena from intervening by suggesting that the battle be confined to a one-on-one battle between Hektor and one of the Greeks. Athena agrees to this arrangement and uses Helenos, son of Priam and brother of Hektor, to tell Hektor to challenge one of the Greeks to a battle. Hearing the message from Helenos, Hektor calls out to the Greeks and asks for a volunteer to fight him in a duel. Menelaus eagerly volunteers but Agamemnon believes that Menelaus is not up to the task. In the absence of a volunteer, Nestor recalls how in his youth, he would not have shrunk from an opportunity to fight to the death, if that's what was required of him. This speech ignites the Greeks and Aias volunteers to fight Hektor. Hektor and Aias engage in battle and are ready to die until Apollo intervenes to stop the battle. Meanwhile, pressure mounts on Paris to surrender Helen. He agrees to return the war prizes he stole in addition to Helen but he will not surrender her. The Trojans offer to return the war prizes that Paris stole, which secures a temporary truce.

**Book 8** begins with Zeus telling the other gods not to interfere in the battle and then departs for Troy. Once there, Zeus weighs the fates of the Greeks and Trojans, which results in the scales tipping in the Trojans favor. The battle between the Greeks and Trojans begins again as Diomedes attacks Hector with a spear but misses him. At this point, Nestor urges Diomedes to retreat from the Trojans who are pursuing the Greeks back to their ships on the shoreline. Seeing

this, Hera urges Poseidon, the god of the sea, to offer assistance to the Greeks as the Trojans prepare to burn their ships. Poseidon, recalling Zeus's order not to interfere refuses. Without Poseidon's help, Hera has to rely on her ability to raise the spirits of the Greeks through Agamemnon's leadership, which has not been divinely-inspired up to this point. Surprisingly, Agamemnon, under Hera's influence, is able to lead the Greeks in a defense of their ships, led by Diomedes. Athena agrees to help the Greeks in response to Hera's request for help. Seeing that Hera and Athena have disobeyed his order, Zeus dispatches Iris to reprimand the goddesses. Afraid of Zeus, Hera and Athena return to Olympus where Zeus angrily rebukes Hera and tells her that he will continue to oppose the Greeks until Achilles returns to the battle. The fighting on the ground stops for the night and both the Greeks and Trojans have an opportunity to collect themselves and prepare for the next day of battle. Book 9 begins as both sides keep an eye on the other to watch for any movement in the other's camp.